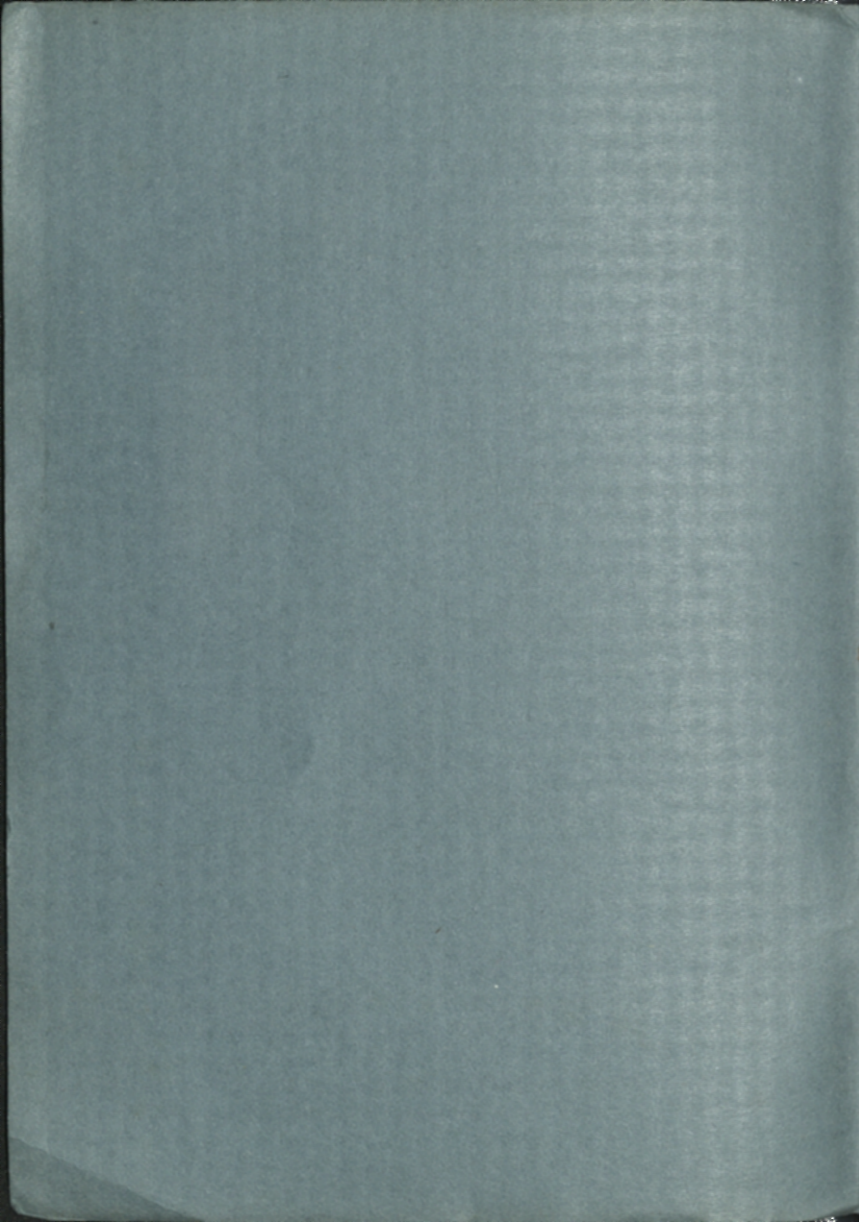


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# AN OLD HOUSE AND ITS FABRICS

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# AN OLD HOUSE AND ITS FABRICS



*Decorative Fabrics of Distinction*

**STROHEIM & ROMANN**

730 FIFTH AVENUE at 57th STREET  
NEW YORK

CHICAGO  
*Heyworth Bldg.*

BOSTON  
*Berkeley Bldg.*

PHILADELPHIA  
*Finance Bldg.*

LOS ANGELES  
*Chillis Block*

SAN FRANCISCO  
*Jewelers Bldg.*



*A floral repeat taken from one of the early copper-plated fabrics.*



**F**AR back among the peaceful hills of New England, surrounded by fragrant and deep pine forests, is an old house replete with memories of past generations. Few have been the changes there. Huge four poster beds and chests-on-chests brought years before over hilly roads by ox cart from Boston and Newburyport, tall grandfather clocks, secretary desks, candlestands, drop leaf tables, Chippendale mirrors, an old seraphine—all are in their long accustomed places. Mysterious trunks and boxes, more furniture and old spinning wheels fill the attic. Odd corners yield unsuspected treasures. Beautiful in-

deed are the various heirlooms, but especially interesting are the most perishable of all the old possessions—the fabrics.

THE house itself with its great timbers and granite foundations seems as substantial as when it was first built. The sturdy ancestor, whose silhouette with that of his wife appears above the fireplace, took his land wild and began to clear in 1785. Five years later he had finished his many spacious barns and his house and was ready to bring his bride to their new home on “The Hill”.

A WORN board-bound day-book records the busy days that followed. New lands were surveyed and broken, highways built, fields plowed and planted in season, wood hauled and chopped, stock cared for. Indeed, the recorded tasks seem endless. But there were monthly concerts at the meeting-house and an occasional “sing” or lecture. There were visiting relatives and quilting bees, “vendues” and trips to near-by cities.



*An embroidered design which is taken from an  
old wallet.*

**A**MONG the many industries carried on in the home was the making of cloth. Although most of this was for their own use, a record is made in the day-book of a sale of "superfine cloth at 9/6 per yd." Homespun materials were adaptable for many household purposes and they usually served as the foundation fabrics for the crewel-embroidered covers and hangings which were so popular with our forefathers. These hangings had scrawly foliage and floral designs, variations some of them of the tree of life pattern. In a recent historical exhibit held at Concord, New Hampshire, several of these very beautiful embroidered covers and valances were to be seen. The patterns were rather small in scale and were very delicate in their drawing. Although cotton and linen were the materials ordinarily employed as the background for such embroideries, a mixed wool and linen homespun material with a lovely sheen was occasionally used, especially on smaller pieces.

**T**HE many printed and copper-plated fabrics which were used for decorative purposes could not be made at home,



*A border from the Indian print which belonged to the first bride who came to The Hill.*



*One of the scenes taken from the hunting print, which belonged to the first bride who came to The Hill.*

but had to be bought or paid for with produce in the cities. The first bride who came to The Hill must have had many printed bed covers and hangings in her dowry. At least several which she possessed have been handed down to later generations. One or two have become faded by long use but most of them retain their original freshness of color and show no signs of wear.

PARTICULARLY interesting and well-preserved is the copper-plated *toile* which pictures Washington and Franklin in the midst of patriotic American scenes. The same pattern printed in red rather than in mulberry brown, as it is in this old cover, occurs on a fabric used in one of the early American rooms at the Metropolitan Museum. Because of the many reproductions of that fabric in the current magazines, the pattern is a familiar one.

THERE is also an early *toile*, copper-plated in red, in which hunting scenes are used as a motif. In a setting made up



*Another motif from the old hunting print.*

of groups of farm buildings and clumps of foliage, high hatted squires are shown with their dogs hunting rabbits or displaying their bag at the close of the hunt.

**C**OPPER-PLATED cottons with floral patterns printed in either one or two colors are here in great variety. Familiar and unfamiliar flower forms are combined in many of these early prints. Daisies and lilies, poppies and wild roses are easily recognizable, but many of the species represented are strange to our eyes. The forms occurring in an Indian print, especially, bear no resemblance to flowers which we know.

**W**HILE most of these so-called "Indian" prints were manufactured in England, they were made to imitate as closely as possible the *pintados* of India, hand-painted materials which were too expensive and too rare for the general trade. But the printed imitations with their interesting designs and color were, in themselves, extremely attractive and found a ready market.

IN searching for historic textiles in an old house, one often discovers them in unexpected places. An old trunk is found cloth-lined with material of unusual pattern, and later search reveals that an antique shop some miles away boasts curtains of the same material. An old wallet is drawn from its hiding place in the secretary. Gay flowers, deftly embroidered in vermilion and carmine red, blue, magenta,



*The cloth lining of an old trunk has an unusual pattern.*

lavendar and yellow gold, are brilliantly set off by a dark green background and bright vermilion lining. As the years passed, other brides came to make their home in the house on The Hill, but the newer generations and the newer possessions never crowded out the old. The past envelopes us on every side. "Get there, get there, get there," say the newer time-pieces. "Time enough, time enough," reverberate the clocks of our grandfathers. And so in this old house, industry, thrift, and a quiet serenity continue to form the warp and woof of the fine fabric of life, the pattern of which has remained quite constant for more than a century.



*A motif taken from a cretonne belonging to the bride who came to The Hill in 1851.*



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